(b) The State Government has been able to stop large scale illicit felling of trees by joint patrolling of armed police force and forest personnel in vulnerable areas.

(c) Regulated felling in the forest as per the approved working plans are carritd out in the States/UTs.

Closing of all the existing Zoos in the country

996. SHRI S. S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have decided to close all the existing zoos in the country; and

(b) if so, the reasons therefor and details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE WITH ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (DR. SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Indians in Iraq and Saudi Arabia

997. SHRI S. S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what is the number of Indians in Iraq and Saudi Arabia;

(b) the number of those who have decided to return back to India and have approached the Indian Missions in these countries; and

(c) what steps Government have taken to bring such Indians safely to the country?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) There are 6,12,000 in Saudi Arabia and about 130 in Iraq.

(b) At the beginning of the Gulf war on 17-2-1991, about 2,000 of our nationals were in Iraq and practically all of them approached the mission for assistance. In Saudi Arabia, the number comes to 117.

(c) Indian missions abroad have rendered all necessary assistance in this regard as a result of which all except 130 Indian nationals in Iraq and 6 of the 117 from Saudi Arabia (as of 20-2-1991) have since returned safely to the country.

Printing of Postal Stamps

998. SHRI S. S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is fact that Government have decided to give the work of printing postal stamps to private parties instead of the Government of India Press; and

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND CHEMICALS AND THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI JAI PRAKASH): (a) and (b) No decision has been taken so far to give the work of printing postage stamps to private printers. There is, however, a proposal of having some stamps printed through other security printers in view of the existing limitations of the Government of India Security Press. Such printing is being considered in addition to and not instead of the printing by the Government Security Press.

Postponement of Non-Aligned Foreign Ministers Meeting

999. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Non-Aligned Foreign Ministers' meeting on the Gulf War which was scheduled

to be held on 2nd February, 1991 has been put off;

(b) if so, what are the main reasons for postponement of the said meeting; and

(c) what is India's reaction thereto?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Memorandum for the opening independent Post Office in the Industrial Area of Waluj in Maharashtra

1000. DR. BAPU KALDATE: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any memorandum from the Industries Association of Marathwada requesting for the opening of independent post office in the industrieal area of Waluj (Aurangabad) in the State of Maharashtra; and

(b) if so, what is the decision if any, taken by Government in the matter?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND CHEMICALS AND THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI JAI PARKASH): (a) Yes, Sir. A proposal for opening a post office at Bajajnagar, MIDC, Waluj has been received.

(b) The proposal is awaiting concurrence of Ministry of Finance, before issuing sanction for its opening.

Extinction of Himalaya Musk Deer due ot relentless poaching

1001. SHRI S. S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Himalayan musk deer is heading for extinction due to relentless poaching; and

(b) if so, what action Government propose to take to protect this species of deer from extinction?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE WITH ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (DR. SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY): (a) No reports of large scale poaching of Himalayan musk deer have been received. Sporadic instances of poaching of musk deer are reported from time to time.

(b) The action taken to protect these species from poachers includes:

(i) The species is included in Schedule I of Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 and hunting of the species and trade in musk or any parts of the animal are strictly prohibited.

(ii) The musk deer is included in Appendix I of "Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora" and any international trade in the species or articles derived from the species is totally banned.

(iii) Regular checking of wildlife consignments is made by the Regional Deputy Directors, Wildlife Preservation to ensure that no prohibited wildlife product is exported in the garb of permitted items.

(iv) A network of wildlife sanctuaries and national parks has been set up in Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim to provide protection to the species and its habitat.

(v) Wildlife wings of these states carry out anti-poaching activities to prevent illegal killing of the species.

(vi) Captive breeding of musk deer has been taken up by the State Governments for augmenting the population of the species.